STORIES OF U. S. FLEET ON DUTY AT THE PORT OF VERA CRUZ

Vera Cruz, Mexico.—Months before the landing of the American naval forces at Vera Cruz and the capture of the Mexican port plans had been worked out for the occupation of the city. They contemplated resistance by the Mexicans and were not merely plans for peaceful patrolling of streets and administration of civil duties.

Five months ago the battleship New Jersey was sent to Vera Cruz and her officers were detailed immediately for a military survey of the city. Outwardly the groups of young officers who were ashore daily were merely sightseeing, riding or walking through the quaint old city and having the best of times. Actually, the city was as carefully charted as if it were a coast of dangerous reefs and shoals. The spots along its waterfront were selected where the men of the sea should land whenever hostilities might start. The straight streets which might be swept by the deadly hail of bullets from machine guns were marked.

Streets Very Crooked.

In a seventeenth century Spanish city such as this straight streets are the exception. Many streets are curved and more have jogs every few blocks, so that the street appears to end abruptly until the end is reached, when it is seen to continue a hundred feet or so to the right or left.

The buildings whose commanding roofs would sweep these streets were listed. The dozen or more high parapetted stone and plaster towers which overlooked various parts of the city were known even to the location of stairways, so that no time might be lost in reaching their commanding turrets. The flat roofs were charted like steps. They were to be occupied in successive series, all the time advancing over the housetops until the city was swept and secured.

The developments of the day showed that the precautions were wisely taken. The capture of Vera Cruz in the warless war was a fight over the housetops. Behind the roof parapets and from the high towers the Mexican snipers fought like defenders of a beleaguered medieval castle. Each city block of the gray stone city made a separate castle. Had their defense been as determined and as united as the attack of the men from the ships the story of American death and bloodshed would have been far more bitter. American foresight knew more about their own city than they did themselves. It struck straight for the high spots.

Fighting Sobers Jackies.

To probably more than half the bluejackets and marines the first two days of fighting in Vera Cruz was a sudden awakening that life in the navy is not all pomp, parade, travel and play. Many had never seen a fellow being cold in death, much less a man killed, or been under fire before. It was a changed body of young men that came back to the ships. Shore expeditions before had been for display or pleasure. This had been grim business, in which comrades of the other happy shores had died, where the blood lust of revenge had run high, and in a twinkling they had changed from carefree boys to hardened men.

In the Plaza d'Cathedral the hospital corps gathered up the mangled remains of a Mexican defender. A three-inch shell had torn away both legs. The close fire of a machine gun had chopped the body as if with knives. Across the plaza to the ears of an officer to whom war had ceased to be play came the ribald chatter.

"Carry the body down the street!" he directed the hospital orderlies.

It was lifted on a stretcher. The men with the red cross on their sleeves started at a brisk pace. Curiously the nearest boys stepped forward to look. With a shudder they drew back. The words froze on their lips. It was as if some invisible hand of ice had stilled their heart beats. Along the line moved the human wreckage of their bullets. It was death's muffler. One glance sufficed. Each sailor boy looked straight ahead. Thoughts flew to homes far away as war's realities were realized. The lesson had been learned.

Tension at Snapping Point.

In the weeks the fleet was assembling at Vera Cruz awaiting word from Washington or a chance which might unloose the flood of war, tension was at the snapping point. It was the vigilance of a stranger in the enemy's country. The island prison-fortress, San Juan del Ulua, lay grim and menacing. The Americans knew four torpedo tubes opened from the sides. Each night the harbor was dragged for mines or wires. Every moment the tubes were watched. The Maine disaster had not been forgotten.

One night in December, across the moonlit waters came the steady thump of the air compressors working in the fort's torpedo magazines. On the battleship Rhode Island the big gongs which sound only the call to general quarters clanged forth. The ship's searchlights illuminated the fort as if at noonday. Enough guns found the range to blow the island and fort out of the sea. The thump of the air compressors stopped. San Juan del Ulua hasn't found a torpedo yet.

During the fighting the cruiser Prairie, lying outside the breakwater, was directly in front of one of the torpedo tubes. While her guns on the shore side were turned on the naval academy one of her eight-inch pieces on the fort side was trained on the torpedo tubes. The fort commandante had been warned that his first move to open the torpedo sluice gates would be the signal to fire a deadly fulminate shell into the ancient fort. The line to raise the sluice gate hung slack.

A picturesque grove of six cocoanut palms stands on the sea promontory of the same fort. Coming into the harbor their waving tops stand clear against the colorless skyline. As the ship's launches come closer a gibbet—a single upright with a projecting arm, from which a now unused noose still dangles—also shows against the sky.

Serve in Army or Be Hung.

Back of the gibbet is a rectangular inclosure. Into this open air "bull pen" under the broiling sun were from one hundred and fifty to two hundred prisoners. Some were army deserters, others prisoners of war and more mere conscripts picked up in the streets and sabanas. All were invited to enlist in the federal army. To impress them with the merits of the invitation each morning, one who had obstinately refused it was elevated on the gibbet. In the evening he was tossed over the sea wall to the sharks. The argument is said to have been effective in convincing most of the prisoners that their patriotic duty was to join Huerta's army.

Everything seemed quiet one night along one of the streets being patrolled by marines from the New Jersey, when suddenly a black form with arms waving shot across the narrow areaway. The machine gun crew down the street saw it and let loose with a roar and the bullets hummed down the street. A minute later it shot back with the same defiant waving of arms. The excited machine gun crew let loose again, but apparently with the same futile result. Lieut. C. D. Barrett, with a couple of his marines, stole down the street. If the uncanny apparition dodging back and forth through the hail of bullets was human it was the strongest man they had ever seen.

"It's only a coat," concluded the lieutenant. "And it's on a rope and a man is working it back and forth across the street."

Coat Makes Last Trip.

A minute later the coat started to flap across the street again. The machine gun two blocks away barked at it in vain. The arm appeared for half an inch. Half a dozen marines let go with their rifles. That was the troublesome coat's last trip. No traces of blood were found, but the woodwork of the door was bored as if by augers.

"Probably some native trying to become a hero to his senorita by getting his coat full of bullet holes," was the lieutenant's explanation of the strange performance.

Those who form their ideas of the navy from comic operas may believe there was such a ridiculous person as the "admiral of the king's navee," made famous in song. Perhaps there was, but more likely the famous English composer created a fictitious person from mistakes, real or imaginary, of many admirals. Admirals make mistakes. So do captains; also many other dignified, stern visaged officers of our own immaculate American navy.

Captain Boards Wrong Ship.

Late one night when the fleet was off Vera Cruz a certain captain stepped into his launch and started for his ship. His thoughts were on the day's work and the plans for the next, and as his boat came to a stop off a gangway he stepped on the landing and mounted the stairs of the battleship's deck.

"Tell the boat to cast off," he said to the officer who saluted him at the top of the ladder.

The officer of the deck did so. He knew it was not his captain, but discipline laid down its rules. The captain strolled across the afterdeck.

The commander—a commander is next in rank to a captain on a battleship, is on duty 24 hours a day and ranks with a major in the army—met him, saluted and passed on. That seemed strange to the captain. He looked around. It was just like his ship, but something seemed strange.

"What ship is this?" he asked.

"The ——, sir," replied the commander, facing about at attention.

"I thought it was my ship," said the captain.

"Drat that coxswain, why did he put me off at this ship?" demanded the captain from the officer of the deck, which also was not according to rules.

The captain descended the gangway. The ship's boat drew up to receive him. The coxswain looked up to the deck for his orders.

"Proceed to the —— with a passenger and return to ship," ordered the officer of the deck.

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the coxswain. The bell rang and the boat was off.

DOUBLES BIG GOULD ESTATE

Under Management of George J., Father's Holdings Have Been Increased Doublefold.

New York.—Under the management of George J. Gould the estate of the late Jay Gould is said to have been more than doubled in value since the death of the widow of the latter. Personal fortunes of the Goulds have increased proportionately.

Criticisms directed to previous Gould management of their railroads find no basis for repetition against George J. Gould. Edwin, Howard and Helen Gould are co-trustees in charge of the estate.

At one time George J. Gould, with the aid of the estate's funds, loaned the Missouri Pacific as high as $20,000,000 to hold off receivership. This was in 1894. Since that date the estates funds have saved various properties time and again.

WASHINGTON GOSSIP

This Farmer Man Knew Something About Crows

WASHINGTON.—Consider crowds:

A farmer man was going along a business street up Georgetown way when, above the clash of traffic, he heard a sound that caused him to look upward. And there on a chimney ledge perched a crow shrilling out his:

"Caw, caw, caw."

While the farmer man was craning his neck, another man, in passing, paused to inquire fraternally:

"Pet of yours got away?"

The answer went off like an explosion:

"What in thunder do you suppose a farmer wants with a crow except to shoot him? I'm plagued to death every year of my life with the darn things watchin' my corn hills from the fence rails, and the first thing I hear when I get to town is this infernal cawin'. What do you reckon that rascal up yonder means by wasting his time here where there are no crops to rob, huh?"

"Oh, we've got a rookery of 40,000 crows near Arlington, and I've watched their goings and comings for forty years. You could time a clock by their movements. Every morning in the early gray they fly down the Potomac to their feeding grounds."

"That's where they get me, blank 'em!" The farmer man made his adjective good and strong—no, not good, just strong!

"Caw, caw, caw," shrilled the crow.

Not So Bad as Cynics Would Have Us Believe

A MAN was limping through Lafayette square.

It was so early of a Sunday morning that the grounds were empty except for the man and a lone person who was coming down a path toward him, and the same primeval stillness lay over the streets outside, not counting the iconoclastic rattle of passing cars.

The man limped because of a stiff leg that had to be helped out with a cane, and it was a slow limp because, again, his architecture included a bay-window front incompatible with high speed. He carried a newspaper and was lumbering toward a tree-shaded bench, when—

Something in the grass caught his eye. It must have been an important find, for, stiff and stout as he was, he made an elaborate effort to reach down to it——and failed.

Then he straightened up, gave a jiu-jitsu twist to his body and tried to stoop sideways. He failed again.

Nobody wants to be officious, but the lone person who had come along and was about to pass thought it might be a case of dropped specs, or something vital like that, and volunteered first aid.

"Thank you, madam. I would very much like to have one of these white clovers if I might tax your kindness."

The lone person picked exactly one clover from the white powdered grass, and handed it to him. The man accepted it with a bubble of confidence due the occasion.

"These little blooms take me back a half century to the farm that was my home when I was a boy."

The woman smiled appreciative recognition of the sentiment as she passed on; the man lumbered over to his bench and—well, that was really all there was to it except—

When a stiff, stout man, over fifty, can carry about with him enough honest boyhood to prize a clover top for the sake of its associations, the world can't be half so bad as the cynics would have us believe.

This Congressman Comes From a Land of Plenty

"I COME," said Representative Holland of the Norfolk, Va., district—and there was a world of pride in his tones—"I come from that land famed the world over for its good things to eat. A land the fair renown of whose oysters and terrapin and hams is sung throughout the length and breadth of the nation from where"—and Mr. Holland, waxing eloquent, harked back to valedictorian days—"from where the icy waters of the Atlantic beat upon the bleak crags of Maine to where the placid waters of the blue Pacific kiss the golden—"

"It's a fact, sir, a fact," concluded Mr. Holland, when reminded that these stories must be limited to 400 words. "I'm right about it; dead right!" And Mr. Holland is right about it; dead right. Just listen to this luscious litany of the succulent, savory things hailing from the district that calls him representative—a litany he chants with reverent ecstacy, as who wouldn't:

Lynnhaven oysters, canvas-back duck, diamond-back terrapin, Crisfield crabs, Norfolk spots, Chesapeake shad, sora, reedbirds, Smithfield hams, March strawberries, April green peas—

Here, waiter, quick! What's tariffs to terrapin, or currency bills to canvas-backs! And don't forget the peanut!

Thing That Thrills Some Visitors to the Capital

ONE thing about the small town visitor that thrills is the niceties he preserves in eating. If a confirmed habitue of one of Washington's fashionable restaurants happens to drop a particularly choice bit of meat on the tablecloth he calmly and unhurriedly retrieves it. He is not nervous about it. He is not even nervous if the waiter looks at him reproachfully.

The writer saw one huge, bronzed man with a mighty walrus mustache and an appearance which justified the belief that he could face 15 bad men with guns and not wink an eye. The bad man had ordered a veal cutlet. And one of the best bits of the cutlet escaped the curtain-draped cave that he called his mouth and fell slushily upon the white cloth. The mighty man extended a hamlike hand to pick it up and had almost captured his game when, looking up, he caught the eye of the waiter. His face turned crimson. His colossal hand flapped feebly around, while he pretended to be trying to look at the salt cellar, the sauce—anything. The waiter went toward him icily.

"Anything, sir?" he wanted to know.

"N-n-nothin'," faltered the big man. "I was—"

"Salt, sir?" asked the waiter, solicitously.

"Ye-es," he stuttered.

The salt was handed him and he spoiled the remainder of his cutlet with it.

And during the rest of the dreary meal he ate solemnly, sadly, hopelessly.

CURIOUS IDEAS OF TRADING

Papuan Village of Unfriendly Natives Offer Human Bones to Make a Trade.

Sydney, N. S. W.—Judge Murray, administrator of Papua, has just returned from an extended trip along the Fly river and its tributaries. He found a district near Lake Murray partly settled, with houses built around trees, on the blockhouse principle, with loopholes for arrows. The natives were unfriendly.

At a village on the lake the chief formed a disciplined body into military formation, and at a signal they manned canoes and did other evolutions with great precision.

The expedition secured specimens of the cuirass made of rattan, which the warriors wear as an arrowproof armor. The cuirass fits from the neck, and covers the trunk of the body completely, leaving only the head, arms and legs exposed to arrows.

The natives have curious ideas of trading. If they desired a tomahawk they would offer a human jawbone or skull, or a stuffed head.

Greeley's Foreman Is Dead.

San Antonio, Tex.—Joseph Ulrich, ninety-five, former composing room foreman for Horace Greeley, is dead at his home here. He attributed his promotion to the fact that he could read Greeley's writing.

Policewoman Is Afraid.

Chicago.—Mrs. Mary C. O'Connell, a policewoman, is afraid to go home in the dark, and when she is forced to work late has a policeman to escort her home.

Buys Distillery to Destroy It.

Santa Fe, N. M.—Just to have the pleasure of destroying it, the Women Christian Temperance union purchased at auction a distillery that had been seized by government agents.

Dig Up Revolutionary Skeletons.

Woodbury, N. J.—John G. Whitall says a group of skeletons dug up here are the remains of revolutionary soldiers killed in the battle of Redbank.

GETS MOTHER'S $16,000 GEMS

"Million Dollar Baby" Fishes Necklace Out of Sand After Others Give Up Hope.

Philadelphia.—Vincent Beal Walsh McLean—the "hundred million dollar baby"—son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. McLean of Washington, demonstrated that he was a better sleuth than a dozen or more society folk, when he recovered for his mother a $16,000 necklace which she lost at the Devon horse show. Mrs. McLean had left her box for a stroll. At the end of the board walk she continued walking on the sand covered portion of the track. The necklace fell from her throat. Unable herself to find it, she sent for the bodyguard who accompanies her little son on all occasions. The boy came with him. With a number of her friends the search was continued. When hope of recovering the treasure had almost been given up Vincent uttered a childish cry, "Here 'tis," and fished from the sand the string of gems. Mrs. McLean was overjoyed.